



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

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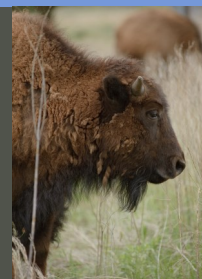
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*Helping People Help the Land*



MAY 2015

# Activity *report*



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## Programs

Field offices across Texas are very busy working on 2014 Farm Bill Programs. May 15 marked the second ranking deadline of EQIP applications. To date NRCS in Texas has obligated nearly 2300 contracts on 1.25 M acres for a total of \$50M. Texas NRCS expects to obligate most if not all of its discretionary EQIP funding shortly. Recently, Chief Weller announced two new initiatives that involve Texas – Drought and Ogallala Aquifer. Applications are currently being accepted for both of these initiatives in the identified treatment areas.

The Regional Conservation Partnership Program recently opened for funding proposals on May 13, 2015. Applications are being accepted on the “pre-proposal” phase of this program through July 8, 2015. Applications that are approved to submit full proposals will be notified shortly after. RCPP involves all Farm Bill programs, and the PL-566 Small Watershed program under one umbrella. Potential applicants can apply through [grants.gov](http://grants.gov) or go to the NRCS website for more information.

May 15 also marked the end of the annual ACEP ranking period. All applications on hand as of today will be considered for funding with FY 15 funding. Texas expects to fully obligate their allocated funding, and if possible, attain additional to address significant backlog in this program.

Field offices are working through two CSP application periods to rank and score 2015 general sign-up, and 2016 renewal contract applications. There were a total of 654 applications in the 2015 general period, and 149 in the 2016 renewal pool. This process is expected to be wrapped by mid-July.



### USDA to Expand Investment in Water Conservation, Resilience across Drought-Stricken States

*Targeted drought funding builds on substantial drought relief efforts*

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced on May 19 that the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will invest approximately \$21 million in additional Farm Bill dollars to help farmers and ranchers apply science-based solutions to mitigate the short and long term effects of drought. These investments will focus financial and technical assistance in the most severely drought-stricken areas in eight states to help crop and livestock producers apply conservation practices that increase irrigation efficiency, improve soil health and productivity, and ensure reliable water sources for livestock operations.

With the announcement, NRCS will provide an additional \$21 million in technical and financial assistance through EQIP to target areas that are experiencing either exceptional or extreme drought conditions as of the May 5, 2015 U.S. Drought Monitor, which includes parts of California, Kansas, Idaho, Nevada, Oklahoma, Oregon, Texas, and Utah. The EQIP funding will allow NRCS to help producers apply selected conservation practices to better deal with the effects of drought in their operations, including prescribed grazing, livestock watering facilities, cover crops, nutrient management, irrigation systems, and other water conservation practices. On average, farmers and ranchers contribute half the cost of implementing conservation practices.

While Texas has recently received rains across a large portion of the state, as of the first week in May there were 34 counties in Texas that were still in D3 Extreme Drought or D4 Exceptional Drought status. Those counties are: Archer, Bay-

lor, Carson, Childress, Clay, Collingsworth, Cottle, Dallam, Donley, Eastland, Erath, Foard, Gillespie, Gray, Hardeman, Hartley, Hutchinson, Jack, Kerr, Kimble, King, Knox, Llano, Mason, Moore, Oldham, Palo Pinto, Parker, Potter, Stephens, Wichita, Wilbarger, Wise, and Young.

Between 2012 and 2014, NRCS invested more than \$1.5 billion in financial and technical assistance to help producers implement conservation practices that improve water use efficiency and build long term health of working crop, pasture, and range lands. These practices include building soil health by using cover crops and no-till, which allow the soil to hold water longer and buffer roots from higher temperatures; improving the efficiency of irrigation systems; and implementing prescribed grazing to relieve pressure on stressed vegetation.

Producers and landowners are encouraged to visit the [NRCS website](#) or stop by their local [NRCS office](#) to find out if they are eligible for this new funding.



### Conservation Client Gateway

On May 28, 2015 NRCS will make a national announcement of the new NRCS Conservation Client Gateway website: [www.nrcs.usda.gov/clientgateway](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/clientgateway). NRCS will be holding a national Client Gateway event in Muldoon, Texas on June 9. Rick Costello, cow/calf operator, has volunteered to host the event.

The event will serve to promote the Client Gateway, a new USDA public website that allows individual landowners and land users the secure ability to request conservation technical and financial assistance from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Client Gateway provides users the alternative to work with NRCS via the Internet as a supplement to in-person support.



A cow/calf livestock operator, Costello was one of a handful of producers from across that nation that participated the Early Adopter Release of the NRCS Client Gateway. Costello provided valuable feedback during the development stages on the Client Gateway and its functionality. Costello has used the Client Gateway to facilitate signatures of documentation and requests for assistance. Costello noted a major benefit of using Client Gateway is the electronic signatures, it saves him driving 140 miles to the field office

Through the Client Gateway, agriculture producers will be able to:

- Request help on a natural resource issue or request a conservation plan on your property
- Apply for financial assistance to help solve your natural resource issues in your conservation plan
- Review and sign your conservation plans and practice implementation schedules
- Electronically sign key documents, such as financial assistance conservation program applications and contracts
- Document and report completed conservation practices and contract items
- Request and track payments due to you for completed and certified contract items
- Request updates (e.g. address, e-mail, phone number) to your customer profile information.

This web application is open to all clients that operate as “individuals” but not business entities. Clients must have a Service Center Information Management System (SCIMS) account and Level 2 eAuthentication. More information about the process to acquire account access is available on the Conservation Client Gateway homepage.



### Important Crop Insurance Deadline Near for Texas Producers

*Specialty Crop Producers, Others  
Need to Certify Conservation Com-  
pliance by June 1*

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) reminds agricultural producers seeking federal crop insurance that they must have their Highly Erodible Land Conservation and Wetland Conservation Certification form, commonly called [form AD-1026](#), on file with their local [USDA service center](#) by June 1, 2015.

Many farmers have their certification form on file meeting conservation compliance provisions since it's required for participation in other USDA programs, including NRCS conservation programs. But producers, like specialty crop growers who receive federal crop insurance premium subsidies and do not participate in other USDA programs, must now file a certification form with USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA).

"Most producers already have a certification form on file, but we want to ensure all producers interested in USDA benefits take the steps to be eligible," said Salinas, NRCS state conservationist in Texas. "We want to make sure producers interested in crop insurance know of the upcoming June 1 deadline. We encourage you to contact your local USDA service center to ensure you're in compliance."

Producers should visit their local [USDA service center](#) before the June 1, 2015 deadline to ask questions, get additional information or learn more about conservation compliance procedures. Producers that file their form by the deadline will be eligible for federal crop insurance premium subsidies during the 2016 reinsurance year, which begins July 1, 2015.

Additional information on conservation compliance is available at [nrcs.usda.gov/compliance](http://nrcs.usda.gov/compliance), including a [Five Steps to Meet Conservation Compliance guide](#) and [answers to frequently asked questions](#).



# Watershed Rehab Report

Rehabilitation planning is completed and in the final review stages for Lower Brushy Creek Site 20 and Upper Brushy Creek Site 32. Williams Creek 3 and Cedar Creek 87A rehabilitation plans have been submitted for initial review. Rehabilitation planning is in progress for Plum Creek Sites 10, 12, and 21, as well as Lower Plum Creek site 28. In addition, public meetings have been held for Lower Running Water Draw Site 4. The assessments for 12 dams are in the process of being finalized; in addition, we just received funding for an additional 19 assessments. We also received 2015 funding for 1 rehabilitation plan, Chambers 10; therefore planning for Chambers Sites 10 and 11 will begin. Funding was also received for designing Williams Creek 3, Lower Brushy Creek 20 and Upper Brushy Creek 32. These will begin as soon as the plans are approved.



*Cedar Creek Site 87A*

## NRCS News

### **Stahnke Selected as State Soil Scientist for NRCS in Texas**

NRCS State Conservationist Salvador Salinas recently announced Alan Stahnke as the new State Soil Scientist for Texas.

A 1995 graduate of Tarleton State University with a soil science degree, Stahnkes first duty station with the NRCS was in Hardin County in southeast Texas. He then went to south Texas where he worked on three soil surveys, Kenedy-Kleberg, Duval and Zapata.

While in south Texas he also worked on details in east Texas and Alaska. In 2002 he was promoted to project leader in Abilene with the responsibility of the Central Rolling Red Plains. In Abilene Stahnke also worked on Soil Surveys in West Texas.

He made the move to Temple in 2008 as a Soil Data Quality Specialist. While in Temple he continued to work on the Culberson and Hudspeth soil surveys in West Texas. He also con-

ducted the soil survey on the Guadalupe Mountains National Park. His areas of responsibility while working as a SDQS was the northern portion of region 9, which included most of Oklahoma and the northern part of the Texas Panhandle.



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